

Thrift Shop: *Recognizing volunteers, helping members find affordable clothing, home goods*

By **Joaquina Sotomayor**
Thrift Shop manager

It's 10 a.m. Wednesday. Laura Moessner takes a look around the room, decides all is in order, and unlocks the front door. The jointly operated Officer's Spouses Club and Enlisted Spouses Club Thrift Shop's open.

She's already flipped the "OPEN" sign on the northwest door of Bldg. 145, 7015 Goddard Dr.

Moessner politely greets her first two shopping customers of the day. From the time she opens the Thrift Shop's retail store and consignment room, she will meet and greet, on average, 60 customers until closing time. Moessner is one of four Thrift Shop managers. Angie Folds, OSC, Angel Errigo, ESC, and Joaquina Sotomayor, ESC, also serve as shop managers. These ladies and others generously give their time and talents because they're dedicated to the idea of helping others.

Volunteers from the OSC and ESC on Malmstrom manage and operate the Thrift Shop. The two groups, through mutual respect and cooperation, have successfully built the Thrift Shop into a well-organized, much-used retail store, and donation-receiving, charitable asset to Malmstrom.

In an adjacent room, known as the Consignment Room, volunteers Karen Gleason, Kathy Hennessy, Andrea Ayers, Mike Weiser, Lisa Trismen and Sue Jones, ready pens and item tags for what is normally a very busy day. The consignment room is where people possessing military identification cards wishing to sell or donate their clean, serviceable or personal property process those items for sale.

Normally, immediately upon opening up the consignment room door there are one or two individuals ready to consign and/or donate their personal property they no longer use. Thursdays, it's Jennifer Gandolfi, Marian Prue, Peggy Kid and Jones who work steadily to maintain the retail store shelves. Trismen, filling the paid position of bookkeeper, also spends many hours volunteering her talents on days in which consignments, donations or purchases exceed the norm.

"I am so grateful for all the folks that volunteer their efforts to the Malmstrom Thrift Shop. They are invariably cheerful, helpful and service-oriented. We literally cannot function without them. The two clubs work together to recruit and train, to organize and

display, to clean and prepare," Moessner said. "It reminds me of a team of Clydesdales.

Individually each of those horses is so strong, so beautiful.

Harnessed together, they can accomplish so much more, and the beauty and power of their synchrony is awesome to behold.

Harness eight independent minds and powerful bodies together, though, and you have complete chaos and destruction if they are not equally yoked and of one purpose. The ESC and OSC are mastering the art of using their respective strengths in tandem, for the benefit of all, through the medium of our Thrift Shop. We are truly an amazing team."

Shop volunteers are quick to point out that their efforts to maintain the OSC and ESC charitable programs through the function of the Thrift Shop wouldn't be successful without the support of its advisers: Eileen Deppe, wife of Col Thomas F. Deppe, 341st Space Wing commander, and Dee Silliman, wife of Command CMSgt Mark E. Silliman.

Errigo's words reflect the feelings of all the volunteers. "We're truly blessed to have two wonderful Thrift Shop advisers. Both Eileen Deppe and Dee Silliman give us their full support. Each has taken time from their busy schedules to be a part of the Thrift Shop, to assure that

we succeed. Their experience, enthusiasm and compassion help make the Thrift Shop an organization we can all be proud of at Malmstrom Air Force Base," Errigo said.

Profits go toward OSC and ESC charitable funds specifically set aside in support of on-base, local charities and Air Force communities. Donations to the Malmstrom Family Support Center, youth activities center, First Sergeant's Association, Great Falls High School, Charles M. Russell High School, Easter Seals Goodwill, Air Force Assistance Fund Charities and the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher House Foundation are some of the recipients of proceeds earned by the Thrift Shop.

Both clubs also depend on money gained from the operation of the Thrift Shop to supplement their respective scholarship funds. On an annual basis, each club awards several \$500 and \$1000 educational scholarships to eligible dependent student and dependent spousal family members.

Mrs. Deppe's endorsement of the cooperative measures taken by the OSC and ESC to ensure continued success and strengthening of the bond between the Thrift Shop operation and contributions to community charitable programs is articulated with pride.

"The support Malmstrom Air Force Base receives from the Great Falls community surpasses any that I have seen in all of the years that I have been associated with the Air Force. Therefore, it is a pleasure for me to see the base reciprocate in any way possible. The Thrift Shop is one avenue in which Malmstrom can show their appreciation to the community by contributing to local schools, charities and many other organizations. The OSC and ESC receive many requests throughout the year and contribute not only to the base and local community organizations but to national organizations as well. The talent and skills of the volunteers who operate the Thrift Shop amaze me and the joint effort of the OSC and ESC in running the Thrift Shop is in the true spirit of Team Malmstrom," said Mrs. Deppe.

The volunteers also admit that they would be remiss if they did not mention the support of those who use the services at the Thrift Shop, whether it's through donations, consignments or purchases. Although comparable services exist in the local area here in Great Falls, we are grateful that so many people support our organization.

Cheryl Scholl, Thrift Shop frequenter, said, "The Thrift Shop here benefits everyone, the people who consign, purchase, and those recipients of the scholarships and financial donations from the Thrift Shop proceeds."

Mrs. Silliman said, "Often-times when we speak of how an organization supports or benefits its community, we immediately think about the financial aspect, as in monetary donations to scholarships, the family support center, Air Force Assistance Fund Charities, etc. While these contributions are crucial and appreciated, we need to recognize and understand that the Thrift Shop also strengthens its community in a much

more meaningful way... One of the key elements a military thrift shop provides is a friendly face in a sea of new and sometimes intimidating faces. Interestingly enough, one of the first places I usually 'investigate' in a new military assignment is the thrift shop. Often I have been able to get a feel for the environment of the base, by the people who volunteer at its thrift shop. And I have yet to be disappointed... the military thrift shop is a place where I know I will receive not only a reassuring smile and friendly conversation, but likely I will learn much about my new 'home.' That type of interaction is priceless, so when we speak about the various ways in which the Thrift Shop provides for and sustains its community... the human touch is what comes to my mind and Malmstrom's



Photo by A1C Jeff Hamm

Jennifer Gandolfi straightens racks at the Thrift Shop May 23.

Thrift Shop volunteers are without a doubt, the very best at nurturing their community."

Trismen said, "I really am impressed with the way you operate the Thrift Shop. I come here every week, sometimes twice a week, to look for items to take to a senior citizen's center. I also really enjoy looking for unique items from overseas areas that only military people might have the opportunity to obtain."

Qualified individuals may bring in a total of 18 items to consign, 10 of which may be clothing items, each day we are open. On the first Saturday of each month 36 items may be brought in for consignment. Items must be in good condition, without stains or holes. A list of items that the Thrift Shop doesn't accept for consignment is available. An item will be returned to the consignor or disposed of if found to be unacceptable for consignment.

Contracts are valid for an eight-week period. A 25-percent consignment fee is charged for items that sell within this eight-week contract period. A withdrawal fee of 10-percent of the item's original sale price is charged for items withdrawn from the contract any time during the contract period. After a contract expires, the remaining items become the property of the Thrift Shop.

Not only do the volunteers truly attach importance to their work, they enjoy many unique benefits. All Thrift Shop volunteers receive first choice to buy consigned or donated items, waived consignment withdrawal fees, and extended time limits on the consignment contracts with a qualifying amount of volunteer hours per month. Also, for current, up-to-date OSC or ESC members, a portion of childcare costs is paid.

Additional volunteer benefits are:

- ☐ 50-percent off Thrift Shop property items.
- ☐ With eight hours volunteer time per month, receive 75-percent off Thrift Shop property items.
- ☐ 10-percent withdrawal fee is waived.
- ☐ Meet new people.

There are currently volunteer vacancies during all three store-operating times, with special emphasis on the operating days during the months of June through August.

Call the shift manager at 731-3213 during duty hours to volunteer.

Hours of operation

Retail Store

Wednesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Wednesday 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
First Saturday of each month 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Consignment Room

Wednesdays, Thursdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Wednesdays 5:30 to 7 p.m.
First Saturday of each month 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.